



"TO CARE FOR HIM WHO HAS BORNE THE BATTLE, AND FOR HIS WIDOW AND ORPHANS."

ESTABLISHED 1877—NEW SERIES.

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TRACY TREMMEL.

The Varied Experiences of the Blue Jay Mess.

A SPELL OF INACTIVITY.

Off on An Expedition After Game Fowls.

A WILY OLD PREACHER.

Cupid Shoots at Lan and Job Enters the Ring.

BY JOHN McLEOD.
Author of "Andersonville: A Story of Southern Prisoners," "A Tale of Infantrymen," "The Red Aces," "Reminiscences of an Army Music," etc.

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LETTER XVII.

CAMP SPORTS AND PASTIMES.

WEARY WAITING FOR ACTIVE OPERATIONS—THE BLUE JAYS PUT IN THE TIME ACCORDING TO THEIR SEVERAL BENT—JOB CARTWRIGHT ONCE IN SEARCH OF FIGHTING COCKS—A MATTER SETTLED ACCORDING TO THE RULES OF THE RING.

CAMP DEFIANCE, NEAR LEWISVILLE, VA., Nov. 15, 1861.

EAREST MOTHER: Are you not fairly tired of the eternal reiteration in the papers of "All Quiet Along the Potomac"? What must you and the folks at home think of us? Do you imagine that we are struck with the lazy paralysis, or that we are afraid to meet the rebels?

We fret over it a good deal, but that is all that it amounts to, for the powers that be do not seem to be disturbed by it.

"President Lincoln expected great things of this regiment," grumbled Job Cartwright a day or two ago. "All our great things so far has been the destruction of grub and blue clothes."

"Yes," chimed in Quin, "and in kaptin' our skins white. O' quipped that Old had a button-hole worked in me hide by a jittle-man in gray long before this, so Old did."

"The prospects are, too," said Lan Green, who, having been orderly at headquarters the day before, had come into possession of some important news, which he doled out to us in small portions, so as to get the utmost appreciation of it, "that this thing will continue through the winter. That is the way Gen. Baldy Smith talked to the Colonel yesterday. He said the orders were strict about disturbing the rebels out here in front of us, and he supposed they would be polite enough to go on attending strictly to their own business, as long as we attended to ours as carefully as we have been doing."

Job grunted and swore, and I think the rest of us did pretty near the same thing. We are not hungry for a fight, but we are getting more anxious every day for something to be done which will look like bringing this thing to an end before we are all gray-headed.

We have settled down to a dull routine, with one day just like another. We have a good deal of spare time on our hands the days when we are not on guard, and each company is according to his individual taste. I am pegging away at my algebra, and manage to read a few pages of Blackstone occasionally. Herman helps at the regimental bakery, and in this way gets frequent opportunities to improve the fare of our mess by baking meats, bread, pork and beans, etc., in the great ovens. Lan assists the Chaplain in conducting the meetings which that gentleman holds on Sundays and occasionally through the week. Besides, he has a Bible-class that meets on pleasant days under a big oak, and at other times in a tent. Some of the roughs in Co. B tried to break up these gatherings, but Job and Quin heard of it, and restored order by inviting the ring-leaders to a little entertainment in a 24-foot ring, according to the rules laid down by the London P. R.

"I ain't any great shakes of a Christian myself," Job proclaimed, "but I can just knock the head off any unregenerate ruffian that disturbs a meetin'. You hear the meller trill of my lagoon, fellows."

Job is as restless as a fish out of water all the time he is off duty. At night he plays cards whenever he can find a game going on anywhere, and in the daytime wanders up and down, getting up foot-races, jumping, wrestling and boxing matches, trials of strength, etc., among those who make any pretense to athletic powers. He is always finding someone who he thinks is a champion of something or another, and putting him against the best man that some other company or regiment can produce. He backs his opinion with money, and generally wins.

One day, hearing Lan Green say that he was anxious to get some hymn-books for his Sunday-school, Job offered to contribute for the purpose a \$10-bill which he had just won on a foot-race with a champion from Co. B, and was astonished when Lan angrily declared that he would not touch with a pair of tongs money won by gambling.

"Do you know?" he confided to me a little while afterward, "I think there's something wrong with Lan up here" (tapping his forehead)—"vacancy in the upper story; rooms to rent that should be occupied with good horse sense. You'n me and the rest've got to look after him mighty close, to see

that none o' these sardines takes advantage of him."

Quin is Job's constant companion and faithful coadjutor in all his performances. If it is a dispute he backs up Job's assertion with a stout affirmation of "Divil a word of lie there is in that. Niver did a man shpake truer," and so on. If it is a match he helps second Job's champion, and get fair play. If it is a fight he can always be relied on, and his brawny fists strike out as quickly and certainly as Job's.

Web Dallas occupies his leisure moments in carving out of an inch pine plank a long chain, to which are attached anvils, ham-



DISCOVERY OF THE ELDER.

mers, pinners, anchors, muskets, etc., all skillfully fashioned. Cad Briggs sits and watches him admiringly, giving what help he can and a volume of praise.

Yesterday morning as we came off guard Job announced:

"Boys, I've got a scheme. Did you hear that rooster crowing out on the hill last night?"

"Yes," I said.

"Well, I'm as sure as I'm alive that there rooster's a game bird—high-bred. I'm going out there to get him, to clean out that rooster them Co. B fellows are blowin' about so much. All of you come along."

"I'll go," I said, eager for anything that would break the monotony of camp-life.

"So'll we," assented Web Dallas. "Won't we, Cad?"

"You're mighty right," Cad chimed in.

"I'll not go," said Lan, "for any such purpose. I regard chicken-fighting as brutal, degrading and cruel."

"O, don't be a dumbed mollycoddle," said Job irritably. "Stop preaching, git your gun and come along."

"Nah, don't be a paygrape monkey wid a blue tail," added Quin; "pick up your blunderbuss and jine the procession."

"No, I'll not take a step for any such purpose," Lan reiterated firmly.

"Well, then, we'll go without you," said Job. "But you ought not to go back on us. We may want you. There's no telling but we may run up against a gang of rebels, when we'll need all the help we can get."

This was an appeal that Lan could not resist.

"I'll not go along with you to get a fighting-cock," he said. "I'll have no part nor lot in anything so brutal and wicked. But if you're determined to go, and there's a chance that I'll be needed to help you against the guerrillas, I'll follow a little ways behind, so's to be on hand if I'm wanted."

"Fix it anyway you please, old feller," said Job cheerily, "so that you come along."

Ezra Grinstead got up a pass, and we started out, carrying nothing but our guns and cartridge-boxes. I took along my canteen, to get some sweet milk, if we found any.

After we passed the picket-line, we loaded and scanned the hills and the valleys carefully for signs of lurking rebels. None was to be seen anywhere, but there were possibilities of ambushes or bushwhacking in a steep-sided, heavily-wooded ravine into which the road meandered, half a mile away. Its dense paw-paw thickets and cavern-like bowers of luxuriantly-growing vines seemed appropriate haunts for skulking ruffians, and we approached and passed through it with much circumspection and our guns cocked.

But, so far as we knew, the only eyes that gazed upon us were those of a quivering rabbit, which regarded us from the roadside for a minute, and then fled away with such speed that his bunch-of-cotton tail seemed to make a white streak over the russet leaves.

On the summit of the hill, a half-mile from the farther edge of the ravine, stood a substantial farm-house, the one at which Job expected to find the game-cock whose crowing had electrified him the night before.

The country was open and clear to and beyond the house, and the outlook so peaceful that we let down the cocks of our guns, and went forward faster and more carelessly than we had done yet.

Job appeared to dismiss all thought of rebels from his mind, and he intent only on game chickens.

"They surely have blooded chickens there," he said. "See that flock out in the field there. That shows it. Game chickens always feed farther from the house than the common kind. They are bolder, stronger and more adventurous. I'll just bet if I can get hold of that chicken I heard crowing last night he'll tear the head off that Company B rooster in one time and three motions, as that son of Belial who is our Colonel would say."

We came near enough to see the fowls distinctly, and Job broke out into a rapture.

"Yes, sir; there he is now. See that high-standing feller there—the red one, with the black breast and white tail and wing-festoons. Ain't he a beauty, though? Weighs five pounds, if an ounce, and can lick anything in the State of Virginia, for money. Just look at them shoulders and breast, will you? Did you ever see finer ones on a bird? Now, the chicken to git him. If the F. V. U. owns him won't sell him for a decent price, dumber if I don't steal him. If love or money 'll fetch him I'm going to have him, and git away with that Company B crowd."

We approached the house by a gravelled walk bordered by strong-smelling box. A score of dogs—among them a half-dozen deep-mouthed grayhounds—gave notice of our appearance by rushing out at us with a clamor that should have notified the whole rebel army at Fairfax of our presence in the neighborhood.

A tall, handsome young woman came to the door and stepped thence to the edge of the porch. She looked at us with indignation and defiance, and said nothing to check the dogs charging and bellowing about us.

Their leader, a large mastiff, rushed directly at Job, who quickly shifted his gun to his left hand, and putting out his right with the swiftness of a flash, caught the dog by the nape of his neck and flung him over the box-hedge into a thicket of rose-bushes. The brute howled dismally as the keen briars tore his hide, and in his struggles to extricate himself was hurt more and more.

The rest of us fixed bayonets and prodded the dogs which came near until they retired yelping.

"What do you Hessians—you hirelings—want here?" the young woman called out. "There's nothing here worth your stealing. There's no men-folks to fight. I only wish there were two or three. They'd run the whole pack of you off the place, and they wouldn't have to be much men either. What do you want, anyway?"

"Don't be scared," said Job soothingly.

"We won't hurt you. We ain't molesting women and children."

"No, nor men neither," she answered scornfully. "Leastwise, you didn't at Manassas nor Ball's Bluff. I'm not afraid of you, but my poor old mother's in the house alone. She's powerful weak and nervous, and gets scared at nothing. You'll alarm her. What do you want, anyway?"

"I want to buy some game roosters," answered Job. "I want that blooded fellow out there in the field. What'll you take for him?"

"Roosters? Well, that shows you are a Yankee. Gentlemen call them game-cocks."

"Call 'em what you please," returned Job, "so long as you sell 'em to me reasonable. What'll you take for him and two or three more like him?"

"Out buying chickens, are you? I thought you looked familiar, in spite of your blue clothes, as soon as I laid eyes on you," she sneered. "Used to peddle down through here, didn't you? Yankee peddler? Yes, I remember you now. Old trade sticks to you yet, though you are playing soldier. Want butter and eggs, too, as well as chickens? Beware, ginseng and mountain-ash berries? What've you got to trade for them? Needles and thread? Notions and tinware? Where's your wagon?"

"I should be sorry for a man that would tempt Job that way. But he is one that nothing can induce to be otherwise than kind and gentle to a woman. His face got red, but he answered politely:

"I'm not trading or bartering now, but paying cash. What'll you take for that rooster there, and a couple more like him?"

"I'm not selling anything to the likes of you—invaders of my country. You can't buy one of those chickens from me, though you offered his weight in Guinea gold."

"Wait a minute, daughter; don't be so fast," called out from inside the house a feminine voice, somewhat cracked. "Ask the gentlemen if they've got any coffee with 'em."

The young woman looked confused, grew quite red in the face, seemed angrier than ever, and appeared on the point of answering her mother sharply. At that moment the mother herself appeared on the porch, and surveyed us with faded-out eyes. That they were mother and daughter was apparent at a glance. The elder was what the younger would be after 25 years of wear and tear. The mother's tall, slender form was clad in a plain but neat calico gown, and a white handkerchief was folded about her throat and crossed upon her breast.

"Samantha, ask the gentlemen if they've got any coffee?" she repeated in an anxious tone.

The mastiff which Job had flung into the rose-bushes dashed on to the porch, and, wild with pain, struck her heavily in his rush. She tottered, and would have fallen forward to the ground had not Lan, who had just come up, seen it in time, and, springing for-

ward, caught her in his arms and tenderly supported her until she recovered her balance, when he assisted her to a chair.

"You are not hurt, I hope?" he asked anxiously.

"No," she said, with a wan smile; "only shaken up a little. Toward's as big as a calf, and he'd knock a man down if he struck him fairly, let alone a weak old woman."

Samantha sprang to her mother's side, but too late to do more than help Lan seat her in a chair, and to catch her face tenderly with a large but very shapely hand. I noticed that Samantha's face changed its expression when her eyes rested on Lan, and when his and her

hands accidentally touched both seemed for an instant as if they had received an electric shock. They recoiled, startled, their eyes encountered each other earnestly, and the color rose in their cheeks.

"Smitten, by thunder. Love at first sight," whispered Job to me. "Lan's a rascal. Well, though she's got a tongue like a razor, I must say I haven't seen a finer-looking girl since we left Colosha."

"Samantha," repeated the mother, after she had recovered a little, "you haven't asked the gentlemen yet whether they've got any coffee. There's clearly a struggle in the younger woman's mind between pride, hatred of the Yankees, and filial affection. The latter at last conquered."

"Mother's not at all well," she said apologetically. "She's been much worse since she's not been able to get any. Have you any with you?"

"We have some in the camp," said Job, but we can go back and get you a lot."

The elder woman's eyes lighted up with anticipation.

"I'll let you have the chickens for some coffee," she said, and a real New Orleans sugar, if you've got it."

"That we have," affirmed Job; "A No. 1, commissary brand, brown as a dead oak-leaf and sweet as honey in the camp."

"I'd much rather have them than the chickens," she continued. "I don't like them. The Elder's been pointing out the wickedness of them. Says they drag people down to hell. I'd rather some one else had them."

"Yes," assented Job; "game chickens are mighty wicked things—especially if yours get licked and lose your money. If I was you I'd much rather drag some one else down to burn'd brimstone than me. Let 'em have 'em."

"You're only Yankees, and it don't matter if they do," she asserted.

"No, indeed," said Job, heartily.

"I wish they'd be so good as to let Samantha, recovering her savagery. 'If they'd help you along to where you belong I'd cheerfully give them all to you, and hunt around the corner for more."

Lan looked at her with a pained expression, whereat she blushed again.

"Let's go into the house and talk it over," said Job.

The women had not invited us in, and they looked decidedly alarmed at the proposition, but this was lost on Job, who bolted in, and the rest of us followed. I was sure I heard hasty footsteps as we entered, but when we got to the room we found the door closed, and the family, a large apartment, with uncarpeted floor of hard, smooth boards, and a generous, open fireplace at one end, in which a wood fire was burning brightly. Split-bottomed rocking chairs were gathered about this, and in one corner was a bed with a valance of green calico covering the part from the ticking to the floor. On the wall was a big mirror, in a beveled frame, of the velvet and inlaid, and in smaller frames were colored pictures of Presidents Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Tyler and Buchanan. A wooden settle, looking as if it had been made of a single piece of the wall, and pungent odors of drying herbs filled the air. West of our guns in the corners made by the fireplace, and disposed ourselves in the chairs. Though the house looked immensely comfortable, the homeliness of the place had left it a haven of delight compared to the camps which had lately been our dwelling-places.

"Let's to business," said Job, after we had become settled. "I want three of the best roosters you have, and I'll give you twice their value in sugar and coffee."

"I don't know much about their value. My husband, who's dead, used to sell them for a good price, and never thought of such a thing as selling his game birds. But if you'll give me a good jag of coffee and sugar you can have 'em."

"Yes, a whack," said Job. "We'll go right back to camp and git you the provisions."

I thought the younger woman looked relieved at the thought of us all going away, and afterward her glance rested on Lan.

"No use all of us going back," he said; "one'll be enough."

"That's so," I assented, for the freedom of the outside of the picket-line was very attractive.

"Yes, one'll be enough," said Job. "All our mess's rations, which we drew this morning, are in the tent, and he can get as much as we want without any fuss or bother."

Cad Briggs finally volunteered to go back, and the rest of us settled ourselves to wait for our return, while Mrs. Lomax, which we found out to be the elder lady's name, dispatched a negro to catch the chickens for us.

"The Life and Adventures of Gen. Francis Marion, by Peter Hodge," when we were all sitting by the fire, I began to read, and said:

"Gott in himself! Was his dis?"

He had gone over to the bedside to look at a picture of the Drunkard's Progress, hanging on the wall, when the door opened, and a man concealed under the bed. Herman raised the valance, revealing two good-sized brogans filled with unmarketable feet. He caught hold of one, and springing to his side I grasped the heel of it. Together we pulled, and the man, a middle-aged man, who, to impede his compulsory withdrawal, grasped vainly at various articles stored under the bed, and brought in a miscellaneous collection of plunder with him. None of it helped him, and when his head appeared we took him by the shoulders and stood him on his feet. The first look at his face induced him to be a preacher. In repose his face looked almost as if it were a mask of wax, and it still retained this, though it was white with fear, and he trembled as if with the ague.

"Who are you, and what do you do for a living?" demanded Job.

"O, merciful Heavens! save him! spare him!" implored Mrs. Lomax, whom the disturbance had brought back into the room. I looked at Samantha. She did not seem to share in her mother's alarm. I rather thought I saw something in her eye which indicated that the situation was not wholly unpleasant to her.

"Who are you? What do you do for a living?" demanded Job still more sternly.

"O, he's done nothing in this mortal world. He's a regularly-ordained minister of the Gospel," returned Mrs. Lomax.

"Let him answer for himself," said Job.

"Again I ask you who you are, and what do you do for a living?"

The man seemed dumbfounded; he answered not a word.

"Who is he?" I asked Samantha in an undertone.

"He's a local preacher—Methodist Church South," she answered in the same key. "I just hate him. I'm Presbyterian. He's one of the vilest men that ever lived. Narrow and domineering with women-folks. Been preaching bloody matters to the Yankees, and now, at the first sight of real live wild ones he runs and hides under the bed. I'm almost glad you caught him."

"Who are you?" demanded Job. "He more."

The man at last seemed to find his tongue.

"Sister Lomax 's told you. I'm a minister of the Livin' Gospel. I'm called the Rev. Ichabod Skillet."

"What was you doin' under the bed?"

"Sir, the Good Book says, 'A prudent man foreseeth evil and hideth himself, but the simple (meaning by that the foolish) pass on and are punished.'"

This staggered Job an instant, but he came up again.

"Yes; but I've also read in the Good Book that 'The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous is as bold as a lion.'"

"True; but the Book also says, 'The wise man feareth and departeth, but the fool rageth and is destroyed.'"

"You're gettin' too deep in the Scriptures for me; I'll have to call in Lan Green. But if you're really a minister of the Gospel you've got to be a good man, and you won't hurt a hair of your head; we've too much respect for your profession."

"No, don't harm him," said Samantha mockingly. "He's perfectly harmless, except with

his tongue. If his bite was equal to his bark he'd be a deadly terror. But it ain't. To hear him talk long before he was begun, you'd 've thought it best to let him alone. He'd start out with the sword of the Lord and of Gideon and never stop till he'd mowed a swath right through to Washington and put Old Abe to the edge of the sword, hewing him to pieces before the Lord in Gillig. But not to-day he's never ventured near enough a Yankee to see him without a telescope. The first one of you's he saw coming up the road he got out that old shot-gun, and says, 'I'm going to conquer or die a glorious martyr to my country's cause.' Then he saw two or three more of you's following, and he came back into the house, stood up the gun in the corner, and said with a sigh, 'Alas, I can't fight the whole world. It's folly to struggle single-handed with the hosts of Apollyon, and crawled under the bed.'"

"O, Samantha, how can you talk so against Elder Skillet?" remonstrated the mother.

"Why, mother, you know as well as I do that it's the Gospel truth."

"Don't mind her, gentlemen," pleaded the mother. "She's a red-hot Presbyterian, as her father was, and she dislikes the Elder, because—"

"Because he's a shouting Methodist, for one thing," broke in Samantha.

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